

**BSW SINGAPORE
NEWSLETTER
SEMESTER 1, 2008**

We welcome our new students into the programme and also welcome the return of students who are continuing their study programme. Reflecting on the year that has gone by there have been many events but some key issues have been the developments in the area of student support specifically tailored for the BSW Singapore. Discussing these means that the newsletter is a little longer than usual but we want to be sure that all students know what is available to assist them through their studies.

There are now three major avenues available to students:

1. Studies and Learning

There is now a learning skills advisor available to assist students in preparing assessments and adapting to study. The learning skills advisor for social work is Ms Mara Reifman available at mara.reifman@lib.monash.edu.au. Mara is available for assistance in a range of relevant study areas. Mara has prepared a summary of her role, and, importantly, how to contact her. This introduction from Mara is attached to the newsletter as appendix 1. Please feel free to take up this form of support – it will be a good source of help for any student wanting to improve their grades.

2. General support and counselling

We have been in discussion with the Singapore Association of Social Workers and they advise that they have available experienced social workers able to offer counselling and support. This can be a helpful source of assistance if you are experiencing difficulties in any area of your life including issues around making the transition to social work from other fields or even if you wish to seek counselling for your personal issues.

If you are currently working for a VWO, you can apply for VCF funding for ‘consultancy’ for this service. Otherwise, the service is offered to Monash/SSTI students at a reduced rate of S\$50 for an hour’s session. Call SASW on 67787922 and ask to speak to the Executive Director Ms Lynette Yeo Balota.

3. Student rights

From time to time matters arise that affect the progress of students through their study programme. These may relate to issues about academic progress or there may be other matters. Students in the BSW Singapore are able to access support from the Student Rights unit in any matters in the same way as on-campus students. If you need such support you should check the Student Rights website and initiate some e-mail contact. As well, you should notice some brochures prepared by the Student Rights office and available at SSTI. The intention is to ensure that these brochures are regularly updated and that there are sufficient supplies available. To initiate contact with the Student Rights office you can e-mail assistance@monsucaulfield.org.au. If you elect to do this it is a good idea to make it clear that you are in the Singapore programme.

As well there is now a Monash Ombudsman. The Ombudsman has the capacity to become involved with any grievances where it has not been possible to resolve such problems with Faculty or Departmental processes. The website for the University Ombudsman is www.ombudsman.monash.edu.au. This website offers an outline of the process and includes an e-

mail contact point. Of course, in seeking to support student rights it is important to suggest that the best way to resolve difficulties is to commence with some discussion with either the relevant unit coordinator or the BSW Singapore course coordinator. Most issues of difficulty can be resolved through dialogue.

Planning is well underway to offer the Master of Social Work programme through SSTI and this programme will include a newly developed unit in Clinical Supervision. Brochures for this study programme will be available through SSTI.

An interesting event in 2007 was the Asian and Pacific Association for Social Work Education (APASWE) Conference held in Penang (Malaysia) during September. Kerry Brydon (BSW Singapore coordinator) and Kumar (BSW Singapore tutor) presented a joint paper about the experiences so far in the bridging subjects, outlining some of the challenges and the opportunities of these educational activities. The conference was attended by academics and practitioners from across the Asia/Pacific region and a number of interesting presentations were available. If you are interested in obtaining details of the paper please do not hesitate to ask Kumar for this. Also, if you are interested in knowing more about the work of the APASWE the website is <http://ssteach1.cityu.edu.hk/~apaswe/>.

September was generally a busy month. There was the annual graduation ceremony held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Singapore. This graduation also combined an Alumni function. All students graduating with a Monash degree automatically become members of the Alumni Association. There is a Singapore based association and you are all encouraged to at least have a look at what might be offered by the Association. For further details please refer to appendix 2 of this newsletter.

The Department of Social Work, led by Rosemary Sheehan, also organised a Conference titled *What Works with Women Offenders: Challenging stereotypes and achieving change*, at the Monash Centre in Prato, Italy. This important conference attracted delegates from a number of countries and offered focus on the important issue of women who are imprisoned.

On the home front at Monash the Department of Social Work has continued to face constraints due to the already advised departure of Professor Chris Goddard and Professor Thea Brown. We have however, been fortunate welcome Ms Stephanie Vrionis to the Department and to the Fieldwork Team. Stephanie comes to us with a background in working with refugee communities in the areas of re-settlement, family support, counselling and the delivery of 'parenting across cultures' programmes. Stephanie joined the fieldwork team in mid 2007 and co-ordinates placements for Melbourne based students. She also co-ordinates the Fieldwork and Skills programme for third and fourth year students in programmes other than the BSW Singapore.

The February workshops will be held Friday 22 February – Sunday 24 February (inclusive). The fieldwork workshop will be on Saturday 24 May and the July workshops will be 11 – 13 July (inclusive). Please note these dates in your diary as it is compulsory requirement that students attend the workshops for all subjects in which they are enrolled. Absence from the workshop is generally only 'acceptable' on the basis of ill-health or significant family crisis. It is therefore important that you do not plan holidays at these times. Any difficulties should be raised with the course coordinator kerry.brydon@med.monash.edu.au.

We would like to wish you well with your studies for 2008 and are happy to hear from you at any time.

APPENDIX 1

Learning skills for Social Work in Singapore

Introduction

Mara Reifman is the new Learning Skills Adviser for Social Work at Caulfield Library, Monash University. Learning skills are the core skills and attributes that tertiary students need to learn within an academic environment and disciplinary context. These include:

- effective study, reading and exam preparation skills
- techniques for effective listening and note-taking in lectures and seminars
- oral communication and presentation skills
- and academic essay, report and thesis writing skills

Learning skills programs support the development of these skills in all students, at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with a particular focus on supporting students for whom English is their second language. Learning Skills for Singapore focuses exclusively on the needs of Social Work Students in Singapore

Description of Services

Drop-in sessions

Real time online 15 minute consultations using a free software (currently using Skype - free download from www.skype.com). No appointment is necessary and students are seen on a 'show-up basis' contacting mara.reifman on Skype. In case anyone has problems downloading Skype please contact me on mara.reifman@lib.monash.edu.au and I will assist them with step-by-step instructions. Drop-in sessions for Social Work in Singapore in on **Mondays** from **8.00am to 10.00am** Singapore time. I will be online in Skype as '[mara.reifman](mailto:mara.reifman@lib.monash.edu.au)' available to consult with or simply chat with students about their learning skills issues.

Classes and Workshops

Online classes and workshops for Social Work students in Singapore are being organized, also in real time, using software called Marratech, free for Monash students in the Faculty of Medicine. Training will be provided for Marratech for tutors and students interested in attending classes.

How to contact us

Please email me on Mara.Reifman@lib.monash.edu.au or via Skype on www.skype.com username 'mara.reifman'. Or you can call me on (613) 9903 4706.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Mara

APPENDIX 2

Local Monash alumni community welcomes BSW students

There are over 7000 Monash alumni living in Singapore and the Monash University Alumni Association of Singapore is one of the most active in the international alumni community.

The alumni community is a good way for offshore students and alumni to remain connected with Monash. Alumni have a great deal to offer current students. Alumni can assist students (during and after their studies) by sharing their knowledge, skills, experience and networks.

All Bachelor of Social Work students are encouraged to visit the Alumni Association website at <http://www.monash-alumni.org.sg/>. This site includes information about events, activities and contact people. Students are welcome at the Associations events.

To find out more contact Ms Dallas Fisher by email at dallas.fisher@adm.monash.edu.au or phone at +61 3 9903 4611 or visit the Association website at <http://www.monash-alumni.org.sg/>